NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE

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Building The Young Audience
The New Nottingham Playhouse
The Capital Without A Theatre

NUMBER 2 2/- JANUARY 1960

'to see them grow up in such a way that they would go out into society fitted and inspired to change it for the better. The restlessness of the young is in fact the only hope for all of us, the only hope we can have that when we have become too weary or discouraged or disillusioned they, with their vigour and uninhibited optimism, will change things for the better.'

—SIR JOHN WOLFENDEN *quoted in*

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MICHAEL ANDERSON HARRY THOMPSON

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Out of Touch

THE EDITORS

MUDDLEHEADEDNESS where there should be clear thinking, inadequate public relations, no concerted plan of action—only too often do such deficiencies result in the loss to the provinces of old theatres and an inability to replace them.

It is distressing to meet a theatre-club member imbued with a touching eagerness to do good, only to discover that he or she is blissfully ignorant of the very existence of the 1948 Local Government Act. It is disconcerting to see a repertory director or a theatre manager standing in silent diffidence in his chilly foyer as the public sneak guiltily past. It is alarming to find that Professors of English at many Universities can view with equanimity the absence of a professional theatre in their local area. Such shortcomings are unforgivable. Until provincial theatre-goers combine in every city to produce a lucid plan of action to promote professional theatre, and until a positive attempt is made by all theatre managements to go out and meet their patrons, provincial theatres will continue to lose their audiences and provincial towns their professional theatre.

Not only are the theatre's partisans woefully disorganised, but their ranks include too many of those who from lack of foresight support the building or conversion of small, cheap theatres devoid of amenities and with little hope of ever paying their way. Such misguided though well-intentioned enthusiasm recently induced a proposal in Leicester to convert the old Corn Exchange into a theatre whose limited seating-capacity and lack of adequate ancillary premises threatened financial difficulties from the outset—a scheme reported in an oddly optimistic article in the (then) *Manchester Guardian* entitled "A Theatre for £35,000". Fortunately, wiser counsel now seems to have prevailed in Leicester, where the City Council is reported to have earmarked £300,000 for the building of a new theatre—presumably to be run on community lines.

The effect of legislation is notoriously slow upon the theatre. A quarter of a century passed before the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 began to make itself generally felt. That the 1949 enabling Act will in due course produce a National Theatre is certain: no British government is likely to repeal an Act which touches upon the formidable name of Shakespeare and which has been implicitly favoured by the Crown (in 1952 Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother laid the foundation-stone of the still non-existent building). Ultimately this legislative time-bomb will explode and blow the British public through the front doors of a National Theatre. Nor can the 1948 Local Government Act be forever ignored. Eventually the implications of this Act will become more widely known among provincial theatre-goers, who will realise that they have authority for knocking with insistent regularity at the door in their City Council offices marked "Entertainments and Amenities". Until this happy day, repertory theatre managements everywhere not in receipt of civic aid might do well to keep a standing paragraph in their programmes briefly noting the provisions of this Act.

The lack of organisation that too often bedevils the theatre outside London is disastrously evident in Cardiff. Elsewhere in this issue an article is devoted to the confusion that robs the people of Cardiff of a professional theatre. The City Council is willing to win prestige by inviting the Welsh National Eisteddfod to Cardiff in 1960, but this gesture does nothing to atone for the Council's failure in its policy towards the theatre. Devotees of the drama in Cardiff must use the period of the Eisteddfod to make their complaints vocal and to see to it that the city's gross deficiency in this respect is made plain to the general public, and to overseas visitors—most of whom take lavishly subsidised theatre as a matter of course.

The Capital without a Theatre

MICHAEL ANDERSON

WHEN this investigation began in August the capital of Wales boasted two theatres. The Prince Of Wales was showing continental films; while the New Theatre, closed for "an indefinite period", sported a poster with the sad appeal "KEEP CARDIFF'S THEATRE ALIVE BY SUPPORTING YOUR LIVE THEATRE". Unhappily Cardiff's "live theatre" is much more dead than alive. The New Theatre has struggled back to a fitful existence, it is true, but the isolated straight play that it dares to offer is indifferently received; and the decline of the professional theatre in Cardiff since the war is well illustrated in the history of the Prince of Wales Theatre, which just over a year ago was the only "straight" theatre functioning in the city. Now, after continued losses from repertory companies and touring West-End productions, it remains open only as a cinema.

Mr. Frank Dooner, a Cardiff business-man, took over the Prince Of Wales in 1957 after the failure of a repertory company there. Within eighteen months the venture had cost him over £20,000. When I asked the reason for these losses, Mr. Dooner emphasised that actors known only inside the West End do not attract Cardiff audiences, and actors of wider repute have small need to leave London to keep themselves before the provincial public when they can do this at a distance, through films and television. When stars consent to appear in the provinces they usually do so in plays which are the property of London-owned provincial circuits. Thus the occasions on which an independent manager is offered a play likely to be a box-office success are so few that he cannot keep his theatre open permanently without losing money.

Mr. Dooner insists that no theatre the size of the Prince Of Wales can show a profit, when presenting touring companies, without a weekly income of considerably more than £1,000. £400 alone is spent each week on the rates, the wages of theatre staff and other overhead costs. On top of this the company, including its actors, must be paid, which demands the provision of at the very least a further £600. In fact to cover this basic requirement, let alone provide a working profit and adequate reserves, productions at the Prince Of Wales must attract five full houses *each week*. "We needed an additional weekly audience of 2,000 to make a profit," says Mr. Dooner.

If touring plays are no longer profitable in Cardiff, what then are its hopes for a permanent repertory theatre? Repertory companies have failed since the war in Cardiff as they have failed elsewhere—through rushed weekly productions, inadequate cash reserves and mediocre bills. Is there any way of creating a theatre in Cardiff which can attract a large, regular and lively audience? I believe that there is; but before tackling that question I should like to dispose of the outsize red herring that leads so many people astray in discussions of provincial theatre—Amateur Drama.

In common with many cities Cardiff watches its amateur stage flourish while its professional theatre declines. The Cardiff Little Theatre Group has a well-earned reputation for performances of a high standard, and Cardiff University has a record of ambitious productions to its credit. In fact it is the amateur stage which caters for the majority of Cardiff's serious theatre-goers. Theatre managers ask indignantly why people will gladly visit or perform in amateur shows and yet remain apathetic towards the professional stage. But how in fact do Cardiff's University and amateur drama groups obtain their audiences? The only University productions which are well

patronized are of plays by Shakespeare, of which Cardiff University has enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the city. Consequently these productions, however good or bad, provide school-children with their only chance of actually seeing the plays they are obliged to study for G.C.E., and the University knows that it has only to present Shakespeare to recover its losses on less successful productions. The box-office receipts of other amateur groups can be similarly misleading. Good attendances are the result of weeks of intensive publicity, and even then the audience is largely composed of friends and relations of the cast. Thus it is hardly surprising if amateur groups offering productions once in several months, and then often running for only three or four nights, play to full houses. The suggestion that amateur groups should support the professional stage by making a point of attending its productions is based on a misconception: it assumes that people have a *duty* to support a theatre, even a second-rate one. Before a professional management can be justified in appealing for such patronage, it must first be able to offer something worthwhile in return; this Cardiff's theatres have so far failed to do.

This leads us directly to the crux of the problem; the people of Cardiff will not visit the Prince Of Wales to see repertory or West-End productions—but does this indicate that a professional theatre in the city will never again be popular? In common with others in the theatre business, Mr. Dooner believes that it does, but I would challenge the arguments he uses to support his belief.

Mr. Dooner denies that the age of the Prince Of Wales Theatre (built about the turn of the century, when Cardiff was a boom city) was in any way connected with the decline in its attendances. Acoustics there are excellent, the stage is large and the lighting equipment modern, and during Mr. Dooner's management the auditorium was redecorated and seating re-upholstered. But the fact remains that the whole building, with its sharply-defined gallery, dress circle, stalls and boxes, has been dedicated to keeping alive pre-war social distinctions (as has a significant portion of its small regular audience). Small wonder then if the undergraduate with a working-class background, or the skilled worker living on a modern estate, decides after one visit to such a theatre that he is making an unpleasant trip into a world which ignores the social revolution of the last fifteen years. There is no evidence that any attempt has ever been made at the Prince Of Wales to remove these distinctions; I doubt if they can ever disappear from a building whose whole structure is designed to sustain them.

That the Theatre management catered almost exclusively for the white-collar classes is shown by the policy of the Prince Of Wales "Theatre Club". This club, with a bar and restaurant on the premises of the theatre, was created in an attempt to persuade more people to visit the theatre regularly, and the membership of the club rose to the astonishing figure of 7,000. It needed less than one third of this number to become active theatre-goers for the missing 2,000 patrons to be found, and yet this number could not be mustered. "We found that people were willing to visit the restaurant, but not the theatre," said Mr. Dooner. When I asked why people would subscribe to a theatre club if they were not interested in the theatre, he admitted that the membership was recruited largely by offering the attractive prospect of wining and dining with West-End actors and actresses. The facts show that the club did little to stimulate a real interest in the theatre on the part of its members, and it did nothing at all towards breaking down the barrier existing between theatre managements and the general public; in fact, by providing a lavish restaurant to which admittance was restricted by the prices charged, it only increased the social distinctions which the modern theatre must break down if it is to survive.

"Television has killed the theatre in the provinces," declares Mr. Dooner. But it is surely true to say that all television has killed in Cardiff is the type of play duplicated on its screens—the light comedies and thrillers that have hitherto provided the bulk of the city's dramatic fare. Hence the unpopularity of the average prior-to-West-End production, and repertory's missing audience. Cardiff's professional theatre can survive only by offering what the theatre alone can provide: direct contact between player and audience. Unlike that of the West End, however, the stage in Cardiff has to make its appeal not to some small portion of a vast community, but to the city as a whole.

Such an appeal can hardly be made without a new building, nor without the full participation of the civic authorities in a planned programme of theatre development. Let us consider a company which does receive some assistance from the City Council and for one month of each year plays to within 80 per cent of capacity in the grounds of Cardiff Castle—the Arena Theatre Company, directed by John English.

Mr. English attracts his patrons not by presenting well-known actors but by assuming a serious interest in the theatre on the part of his audience (last year's repertoire included *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Pygmalion* and *The Entertainer.*) Moreover, he tries to build a future audience through children's performances, annual block bookings and seats cheap enough to meet the teenage pocket. He makes theatre-going a pleasant social event; the foyer is brightly decorated and hung with original paintings, and coffee is available before the show as well as during the intervals. And he succeeds where the Prince Of Wales Theatre Club has failed dismally: by making himself accessible to *anyone* who visits the theatre he creates a direct contact between the theatre manager and his audience.

Admittedly the Arena Theatre's capacity (around 500), is hardly half that of the Prince Of Wales—a fact which, coupled with the failure of the Prince Of Wales, has led a considerable body of opinion in Cardiff to suppose that the city will never support more than a small "intimate" theatre. But the possibilities of success for an attractive new permanent theatre in a central site, with a fully licensed bar and restaurant, cannot be deduced from the fortunes of a smaller theatre which performs under canvas for one month in the summer season. And how can any theatre whose maximum capacity is 500 ever hope to make a profit on its box-office takings? For a second fact of consequence about the Arena Theatre is that it is not self-supporting. Indeed, it could never visit Cardiff at all if part of its expenditure were not covered by the City Council.

I visited the City Hall to enquire about the Council's policy towards the theatre. The City, I found, spends a good deal on cultural activities, much of this money being raised under the 1948 Act which enables an annual rate of 6d to be levied for the purpose; the amount spent from year to year fluctuates, but the full 6d rate has never yet been used. This means that several thousand pounds, which could be used to support a theatre, are still available each year to Cardiff. Here are some of the ways in which money is spent:

The Welsh National Museum in Cardiff receives £8,625 p.a. (This is levied under the nineteenth century Museums Act.)

The Welsh National Opera Company receives £2,000 p.a. (It should be noted that this grant, which far exceeds the total expenditure on drama, goes to a company which visits Cardiff only for a very short season each year.)

The Welsh Folk Museum receives £1,000 p.a.

The National Eisteddfod, which is to take place in Cardiff this summer, will receive £17,000 over the next two years.

In addition to these and similar expenses, £2,500 is set aside annually as an uncommitted

sum for miscellaneous subsidy as the need arises. For instance, the Council will undertake to cover the losses of a visiting symphony orchestra. I asked if any of this £2,500 has ever been used for theatrical purposes. The reply was illuminating: "So far as I know, we've never been asked . . ." This, when the Prince Of Wales Theatre is struggling to keep open by showing continental films!

By contrast, the money spent on sponsoring dramatic production is small: last year the Children's Theatre Movement (which performs in Cardiff Schools) received £200 from the Education authorities. The Arena Theatre received an estimated £500, in the form of a direct grant of £250, the provision of a free site and other facilities amounting to a further £200, plus payment by the Education authorities of 1/- towards the admission of each schoolchild to the special children's performances. I asked why these figures fell so far short of other expenditure. "Our policy at present," was the reply, "Is that we are prepared to give grants to established institutions, but not to initiate such expenditure ourselves." This may have been a justifiable attitude when Cardiff possessed two flourishing theatres, but now it is woefully unrealistic. It was not by supporting "established institutions" that the city's Public Libraries or the Welsh National Museum were built.

My last question was whether the city had ever considered following the lead given by Coventry and Nottingham and building a municipal theatre. I was told that a scheme is under consideration for the provision of a combined art gallery and studio theatre in Cardiff Castle Grounds, to be used by Cardiff College of Music and Drama and possibly by visiting companies. This proposal may sound attractive; I suggest that it is full of dangerous possibilities. The building of such a theatre may set a few consciences at rest; but we may assume that the Council would then excuse itself from sanctioning further expenditure on a genuine professional theatre, and Cardiff's drama would be reduced for ever to student exercises and amateur productions.

Here then are three concrete proposals which need to be acted upon immediately if Cardiff is to possess a permanent professional theatre:

(1) The City should purchase a site for an Arts Centre, to include a theatre, a picture gallery, a restaurant and ancillary premises. An architect should be found by competition.

(2) The Prince Of Wales Theatre Club should translate itself from a mere social club into a militant body working to arouse enthusiasm in the city for a new theatre worthy of the capital of Wales, and should badger the City Council until action is taken.

(3) The University should adopt a responsible attitude towards modern culture as much as towards medicine and nuclear physics. Precedent exists in Glasgow, Bristol and London for an active connection between University and College of Dramatic Art; thus the part which the University could play in organizing public opinion would be an important one.

The opportunity for action of a bold and imaginative kind exists; so does precedent for the form of that action. At the moment there is every indication that this opportunity will be either missed or frittered away. The people of Cardiff must make it clear that they will not be satisfied until this situation changes.

The New Nottingham Playhouse

PETER MORO

(PETER MORO is architect of the proposed new Nottingham Playhouse. The following article is based on a recent discussion between Peter Moro and Peter Hall on B.B.C. Midlands Television. In it Mr. Moro amplifies some points made in this discussion.)

Three main problems confront the architect designing a new theatre: fitting the theatre into a wider social framework, regaining an intimate actor-audience relationship, and achieving flexibility in staging. No satisfactory prototype solution of these difficulties exists. The first can be overcome by providing pleasant and comfortable accommodation both inside and outside the auditorium, and it is therefore now considered desirable to attach to the theatre a café and a licensed restaurant, with a gallery for exhibitions of painting, sculpture and allied arts. Such facilities ensure that a theatre building is alive during the day as well as in the evening, and provide additional revenue without which a theatre cannot be an economic proposition and needs substantial subsidy. One look at the plan of a modern well-equipped theatre makes it immediately apparent why this is so; the size of the theatrical apparatus needed to entertain a comparatively small audience is disproportionately large.

This first problem, however, raises few architectural difficulties, and is largely a question of the initial availability of capital.

A much more elusive problem is the creation of a modern auditorium which will have intimacy and will establish a close relationship between the actor and his audience. This was done most successfully in the horseshoe shape theatres of the 18th and 19th century and is being lost in more recent theatre design. The functional approach to auditorium design which merely takes into account sight lines and other physical considerations to the exclusion of psychological requirements has produced a fan-shaped or rectangular auditorium where straight rows of seating stare at a stage with the orchestra pit, like a moat, aggravating the separation of stage and auditorium. This form of auditorium may be adequate for the cinema but is certainly unsuitable for a theatre. The actor will give of his best when he feels himself to be the focal point of the audience. This means that it is important to bring the audience as close to the side of the proscenium as is possible and for the seating to be arranged in curved rather than straight lines. The cinema type auditorium fails to establish this subtle link in spite of its perfect sight lines, while the horseshoe shape comes much closer to the ideal in spite of some marginal seating.

By far the most difficult problem, however, is to solve the demand for flexibility. Two types of stage are required in a modern repertory theatre; one being the picture frame stage for which most of the plays that a repertory company has to perform are written. The other is the open stage, which allows productions very much on the lines of the Elizabethan theatre as well as some experimental work. The requirements for these two forms of stage are almost diametrically opposed and architects both here and abroad are trying to reconcile these conflicting demands. For an open stage to be effective it must thrust itself dynamically into the audience leaving parts of the audience on either side of it. The fan-shaped auditorium has not the width near the proscenium to arrange such seating and its fore-stage, however deep, will do nothing except push the audience farther back. On the other hand the width required near the front of the auditorium, to arrange side seating to the fore-stage, is of little use with the picture frame stage, and to write off areas

of seating during certain productions is uneconomical and presents architectural problems. Although not impossible in theory, an auditorium which can change its shape to suit different purposes is prohibitively expensive and wasteful in space. In continental theatres where enormous sums of money are available for theatre design this problem is partially solved by the introduction of two different theatres in one and the same building; the large one providing a picture frame stage only, for opera and more conventional productions, the smaller one, sometimes called the studio theatre, for experimental work assuming that such productions will draw smaller audiences. For financial reasons the provision of two auditoria is not a practical proposition in this country and this dual-purpose requirement must therefore be solved in one and the same auditorium. This inevitably results in a compromise solution—and as such has the weaknesses inherent in a compromise.

The Nottingham Playhouse, which is to be situated near the City Centre, forms part of a wider conception. In addition to all the amenities which I have described as desirable, it contains a number of bars, a club room where members of the Theatre Club can meet, and a small block of actors' flats. In this central but quiet position and with adequate car parking facilities available, it is hoped that the building will be fully utilised during the day and that while there to have a meal, for instance, it would be an easy step to the booking office to buy a ticket for the theatre.

The auditorium seats 760 people, 546 in the stalls, 214 on the balcony. It is circular in shape and forms the core of the architectural composition. This architectural statement is clearly perceptible from the outside of the theatre as well as from its surrounding foyers. The fact that the volume of the auditorium can be sensed when approaching it is likely to heighten the feeling of excitement and curiosity. This will be particularly effective at night when lighting is used to emphasise this point.

The circular shape of the auditorium itself was decided on after considerable research and numerous visits to theatres old and new, both in this country and abroad. Discussions with producers and actors have confirmed this decision.

Although it is true to say that the diagram of sight lines for a given picture frame stage would suggest a rectangular or wedge-shaped auditorium, it is possible to superimpose such a seating layout on a circular plan and to utilise the areas at the sides, where sight lines are not ideal, for purposes of circulation and, in this particular case, desirable television camera positions (a theatre suitable for television broadcasting requires a greater width-to-length ratio than is customary). It is thus possible to combine a reasonably functional layout of seating with an auditorium shape which is considered correct psychologically.

It has been pointed out by some producers that the character of the auditorium should be negative, so that whatever action takes place on the stage will provide its own atmosphere. I disagree with this and feel that it is most essential that when entering the auditorium before a performance the auditorium should radiate a festive atmosphere which will be subdued as the curtain rises. This can be done by lighting so that there is no danger of an exciting auditorium distracting from the action on the stage.

The circular, or rather cylindrical, shape also results from an attempt to provide flexibility. A portion of the drum is cut away to form the proscenium opening and will give the effect of looking from the auditorium into another world. Whereas most modern theatres are designed as picture frame theatres first and foremost, allowing an ineffective fore-stage arrangement as a secondary consideration, I have tried in the Nottingham Playhouse to develop the open stage arrangement to be of equal effectiveness. When the fore-stage is used the picture frame opening is closed and will tend

to complete the cylindrical form of the auditorium behind the fore-stage. Thus the action takes place in the auditorium and actor and audience are enclosed in one clearly defined space. The proscenium then changes its function from an aperture to being merely a background and it is for this reason that an elaborate frame has been omitted. The fore-stage itself, which will consist of demountable units allowing a number of different shapes will project well into the auditorium and seating on either side will be arranged in such a way that it will appear to penetrate the stalls seating.

In order to light fore-stage work which is well in front of the normal lighting grid, a floating canopy has been designed which is suspended over the fore-stage and on to which spots can be fixed to suit such a production. This canopy also incorporates acoustic reflectors and fulfils certain requirements connected with Television broadcasts. Although a piece of theatre equipment, this device is featured architecturally and is, of course, seen from the auditorium itself. Far from being a distraction, it is my feeling that this will contribute to a sense of anticipation and will contribute to the character of a theatre in which lively experiments take place.

There are entrances on to the fore-stage at either side of the proscenium at various levels and it should be possible to place parts of the scenery in this position. When the fore-stage is used in conjunction with the stage it will be possible for the set to flow from the stage proper through the proscenium arch into the auditorium itself and establish a close link between action and audience. When the fore-stage is not in use the stalls floor and seating extend up to the proscenium. When an orchestra is needed part of this front stalls floor can be removed to form an orchestra pit for 25 players.

The stage itself has a proscenium opening of 32 feet and a depth of 50 feet. The stage tower allows for 18 foot scenery to be flown. Large wing spaces have been arranged on the North and South side and the use of two trucks for sets has been provided for. Immediately adjoining the stage is the paint frame on two levels and the carpenter's shop, which although close at hand is heavily insulated acoustically so that no noise is transmitted to the stage. Scenery and properties are delivered from a courtyard to the stage and store which is 3 ft 6 in. above it, thus forming a natural loading dock. Eighteen foot flats can be stored vertically. The dressing rooms are arranged on two levels, and the principal dressing rooms at stage level and others below are all artificially heated and ventilated. Above the dressing rooms are the rehearsal room, large enough to allow a full scale set to be mocked up or marked; a laundry, dressmaking room and wardrobe. Perhaps less common is the inclusion of a Green Room where actors can, if they wish, meet colleagues and friends.

The administration is placed where natural light is available and where it can be connected with both the stage and the foyer. The Manager's office overlooks the entrance foyer and there are offices for the secretary, director of production and general manager, and a small conference room.

Although it is impossible to convey in words the atmosphere of a building which is achieved by the handling of space, the choice of material, the use of colour and the quality of light, it must be realised that its architectural character is uncompromisingly of its time. There is no need to apologise for this; on the contrary, there is no valid alternative to a live architecture which solves present-day problems by present-day means. To those who find it difficult to get away from preconceived ideas of what a civic building should look like, this building may come as a shock at first. But when one realises that such ideas are based on associations with building of a period entirely different from our own it will not be surprising that this difference will express itself architecturally. Whereas civic building tended to be heavy

and pompous, modern methods of construction and a change of spirit produce exciting solutions, elegant and adventurous; a building to be used and enjoyed, not a building to subdue and impress. This is evident not only in the construction and modelling of the building itself but also in the choice of materials used. These used to be rich but impersonal and forbidding; today more sympathetic materials are used and these are often put into contrast with rough and inexpensive materials. This is not merely a question of economics but has positive aesthetic qualities which are entirely in keeping with present day conditions.

One hopes that this new Playhouse, if successful, will encourage other public authorities to follow the imaginative lead given by Nottingham.

An architect keeps his design as fluid as possible, as long as possible, and constantly modifies and improves. The result is that the illustrations, although sufficient to convey the scheme in general, have since in some respects been altered in detail.

A Tory and the Provincial Drama

SIR JOHN W. RUSSELL

BEFORE beginning upon this article I think it well that I should declare my interest in the matter, since, I believe, unlike Mr. Glenvil Hall, I am actively connected both with the theatre and the opera house, as I am a Governor of the Royal Victoria Hall and a Director of the Old Vic Trust, and a Governor of Sadler's Wells.

On Tuesday, August 25th of this year, the Conservative Political Centre published a modest pamphlet called 'The Challenge of Leisure.' In it was a chapter devoted to the Arts, in which special reference was made to the Theatre. Like all publications issued by the C.P.C. it was not an official statement of Party Policy, but a contribution to discussion. Mr. Glenvil Hall, in his informative article "The Labour Party and the Provincial Theatre", which appeared in the first number of this periodical, was quite right when he claimed that, at the time he wrote, the Labour Party was the only one which had officially announced what it intended to do, should it be returned to office at the ensuing Election. The fact is, of course, that, whereas an Opposition can make official pronouncements of policy in the form of a brochure, practice for a Government is to do so in the form of a Bill or White Paper. But, when the Conservative Party issued its Election Manifesto, "The Challenge of Leisure" was not ignored or disclaimed. On the contrary, the Manifesto said, and said in bold type "WE SHALL DO MORE TO SUPPORT THE ARTS, INCLUDING THE LIVING THEATRE".

Since then the Election has been fought, and the Tories have been returned to power. This makes the question of what the policy of a Conservative Government will be towards the Theatre one of immediate interest. This article makes no claim to be in any way a pronouncement of what that policy will be. As already explained, any such statement would necessarily take an official form. But the omens are good. Theatre-lovers have reason to expect consideration from a Tory Government at least as kindly as they would have received from Labour. Nor will this come as any surprise to those who have been following

recent developments. They will remember that, when, in July last, a Parliamentary Delegation waited on the Financial Secretary of the Treasury to plead the cause of the National Theatre, it was an All-Party Delegation speaking with one voice. There is no Party issue here. The approach may be different, but the object is the same. All Parties have heard and responded to the growing call from the public, and in response all Parties are disposed to help the Theatre.

Official benevolence towards Drama is something quite new in British politics. It is in the theatre that Britain has made her greatest contribution to the Arts, a contribution unsurpassed by France or Greece. Yet all through history the British have been in two minds about the Theatre. Through the Middle Ages the Church frowned upon the minstrels, but stimulated the development of dramatic art in their own Miracle Cycles. All through the second half of the fifteenth century, when English Drama made miraculous growth in fifty years from *Gammer Gurton's Needle* to *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*, the actor, patronised and protected by Gloriana and her Court, was to the civic authorities an unmitigated nuisance. In the eyes of the law he was a rogue and vagabond, driven to display his art in purlieus outside the City boundaries like Southwark or Shoreditch, and only saved from the stocks as long as he wore a livery and could call himself one of the Lord Chamberlain's Men or even one of the Queen's Men. After the Cromwellian eclipse the Restoration dramatists did nothing to shake the stern conviction of the sons and daughters of the Puritan Revival, always a sturdy and influential body of opinion, that a visit to the playhouse was a wicked waste of time and money. Tradition in this country dies hard. It may be unfair, but it is human for a lover of the Drama in Britain, casting his eyes across the Channel, to find something atavistic in the traditional attitude towards Drama of the Treasury, whose emanation, the Arts Council, could in its last financial year find the reasonable sum of £700,000 for Opera, while for the Drama the total grant was only one-tenth of this amount.

But the attitude of the general public towards the Theatre is changing, and changing rapidly. What has brought the change about is a subject it would be fascinating, were there time and space, to pursue, but of the change there is no doubt. It has shown itself most clearly in the matter of the National Theatre. Last July saw that All-Party Parliamentary Delegation which was not unkindly received. Another sign in London of the changing times was the dramatic gift which will realise the sum of £15,000 a year for three years to the Old Vic from the House of Whitbread. History repeating itself, for it was another Whitbread to whom was due the rebuilding in 1812 of Drury Lane. There is a tremendous opportunity for the extension of public patronage in the provinces. The attitude of the public towards the Theatre is changing, and not a moment too soon. As the result of the ambivalent British attitude to Drama, London has the largest theatrical industry in the world—the word industry is used advisedly, for it is the commercial theatre largely which it houses—but the classical theatre in London, though its flag flies proudly, finds it difficult to survive, and the provincial theatre, with notable exceptions like Nottingham and Coventry, to which certainly should be added the honoured name of the Bristol Old Vic, is in a bad way. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. A change in the public attitude has produced reactions in official circles. Help is on the way. What form should it take? Here is the opinion of one Tory, formed after long discussion with colleagues who collaborated to produce 'The Challenge of Leisure'. For this opinion the writer alone is responsible.

The tradition of British Drama is supreme, and the time has come for its supremacy to be officially recognised. There is something which Drama can give to a nation which it can draw

from nothing else. During the Golden Age of Athens, when she founded her Empire, beat the barbarian and produced buildings and sculpture which are still the wonder of the world, that little city state, half the size of Bristol, gave to her citizens and the world a wealth of drama still unsurpassed, though ours can equal it. Who can doubt that when England, under the first Elizabeth, was finding her soul, it was the magic of Shakespeare which best reflected a nation welded into one? Passage after passage from the Histories crowd into the mind—"Come the three corners"—"this precious stone"—and so much from *Henry V*. The City Fathers could not see it, but Gloriana did. It can be no coincidence that these two Golden Ages in history coincided with a Golden Age in Drama. And it is at last realised, perhaps sub-consciously, that this creative art, which can only do its work fully in the living theatre, is something which every British boy and girl, man and woman, should have the right to enjoy.

The way to bring this about is to make the decision to build a National Theatre. A majestic site has, as the result of a public-spirited decision of the London County Council, been made available on the South Bank. This should be safeguarded forthwith by the decision that on it the National Theatre will be built.

But the National Theatre is more than bricks and mortar. The building itself should be Phase Two of the operation. Before it is built we must have a living organisation of actors and actresses, a "mass of manoeuvre" as Marshal Foch would have called it, built up to present the best in drama to London, the provinces and the world overseas, and forming the nucleus of the National Theatre Company.

Such an organisation is best formed round something already in being which has proved its worth. This we find in the Old Vic. For it the Arts Council should provide a subsidy comparable with the £700,000 it now gives to Opera. The All-Party Delegation spoke of £150,000 a year, to be paid for five years, and that seems a practicable figure for a start. With this aid, the Old Vic should be charged to train the Company which will form the backbone of the National Theatre when it is opened, and will play the best drama in London, the provinces and overseas.

Exactly how matters will develop it is too early to say. The Tory approach on such an occasion is, as far as possible, not to direct or control, but to create an environment in which the best will grow and flourish. It may be that a theatre grid will develop. It may be that theatres will spring up, or existing theatres will take fresh life, in provincial centres, especially University towns and cities. What is certain is that the effect of such a decision on the provincial theatre, its actors, actresses and producers, would be electric. There is nothing so galvanising as the rumour that there is someone "in front". A decision to found a National Theatre as above suggested would mean that at last there would be a live central body, with money to spend, looking for the best and able to engage them. A great wind would blow through the provincial theatre. A mere handful of promotions, with the hope of more, would bring performances to life all over Britain, and the live performances would bring in the audiences.

And that should only be the beginning. Nothing succeeds like succeess. Powers were conferred on municipalities by the Government Act 1948 to finance Drama out of the rates. We all know how disappointing, speaking generally, have been the results. Earlier I have mentioned the fortunate position of the Continental theatre and subventions in comparison with the position of the theatre here at home. This money so munificently disbursed to the Continental theatre is not something conjured out of the atmosphere; it is bound to be derived from public money—from taxes either local or national. In connection with the operation of the Local Government Act 1948 one reason for the poorness of the response is the

unwillingness of the Councillors to suggest either an increase of the rate to cover local culture or alternatively savings which could be made which might permit of even a penny rate being applied to this purpose. This in my view is a misguided attitude fostered by the unthinking attitude of a number of people completely uninterested in any form of entertainment not provided by either cinema, television or sound radio. Examine for a moment, if you are a ratepayer, the number of headings upon which your money is spent, and find how many of the headings are applicable to yourself. It may be that many of them do apply, but most unlikely all of them. If you are a lover of culture, is it unreasonable to think that, while you are spending sums of money upon education of children, a little might be spent also upon the local theatre? But a lead from the top should, and must, make a dramatic difference. It should, and must, inspire in every area of population some leader, some lover of the drama with the flair for collecting a following, to awake local patriotism, to enlist some local patron, and to galvanise or shame the local authority to exercise its statutory rights. The House of Whitbread has reminded us that the day of the private patron is not done. Nottingham, Coventry and Bristol are all examples of how civic effort can co-operate with voluntary aid.

Local patriotism, the private patron, local government, and, guiding all, the Arts Council, each must play its part in the nation-wide revival which official recognition of the need for a National Theatre should lead. Local patriotism may turn out to be the most important factor of all. To it artistic enterprise should look, using where possible the "pound for pound" approach in seeking extra subsidies from industry, including television companies, and local authorities. The Arts Council in its turn should continue to support only those companies who have proved that they are worth supporting and have a survival value. Self-help and a proper sense of stewardship should be looked for in drama, if it is to expect public help. The full and proper use of public money can and ought to be as effective in this field as in any other.

Here, then is hope for the provincial theatre. The Government is pledged to support the living theatre, and it will keep its pledge. How soon, and how much, may depend upon the strength of public opinion. It is for every lover of the theatre to decide how best, by his or her enthusiasm and action, the revival of the provincial theatre to which we all look can be speeded.

International Student Drama Festival

Bristol: July 26th—August 2nd, 1959

PROFESSOR H. D. F. KITTO

SIXTEEN performances within six days, and only three of them "repeats": it sounds perhaps more like a motor-cycle scramble than a serious dramatic enterprise. Add to this the fact that the plays were performed in one or other of seven languages: English, Swedish, French, Italian, Portugese, German or Turkish. It sounds perhaps like an attempt to build a new Babel within Chaos. In fact, it was nothing of the sort; the festival was a remarkable success, artistically and—no less important?—socially.

Of course it was not created out of nothing. Two European organisations have been growing since the war, each having the object of bringing

The New Nottingham Playhouse

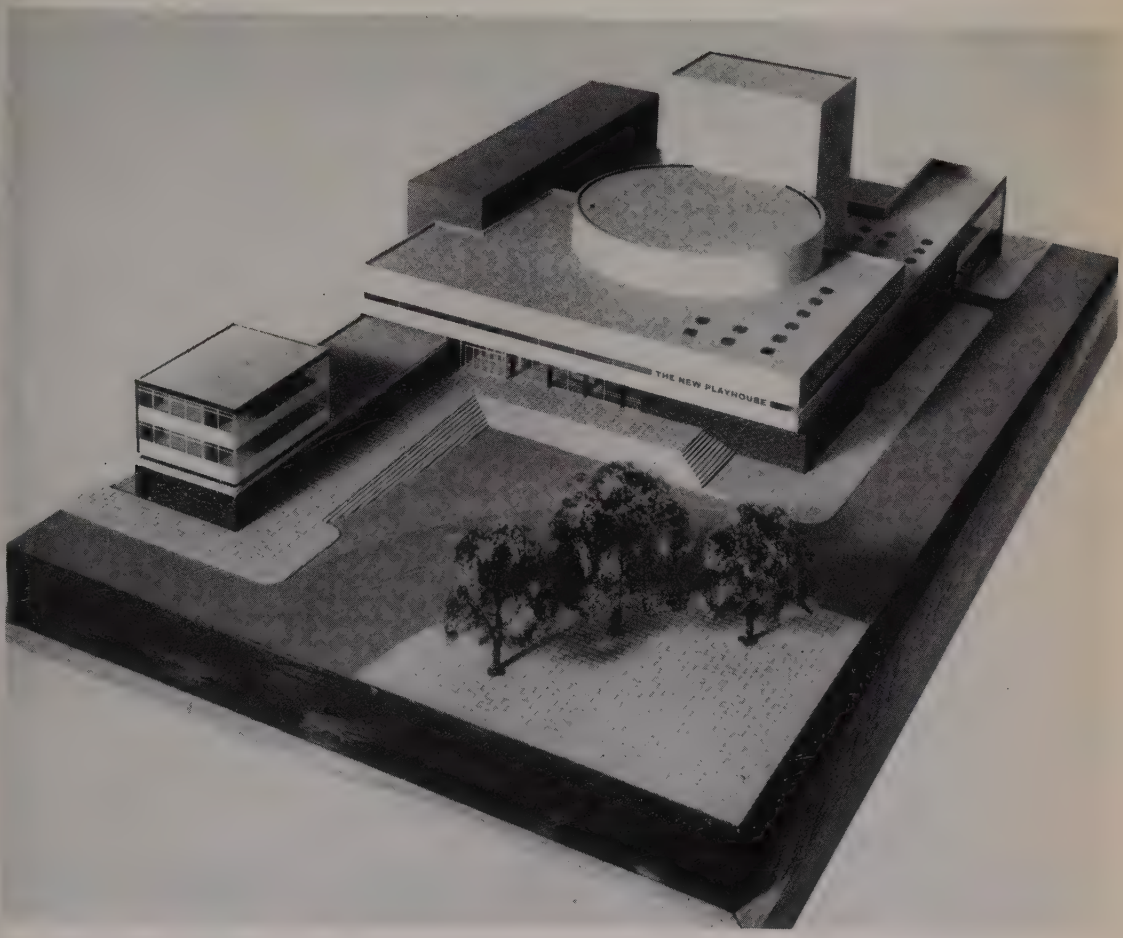
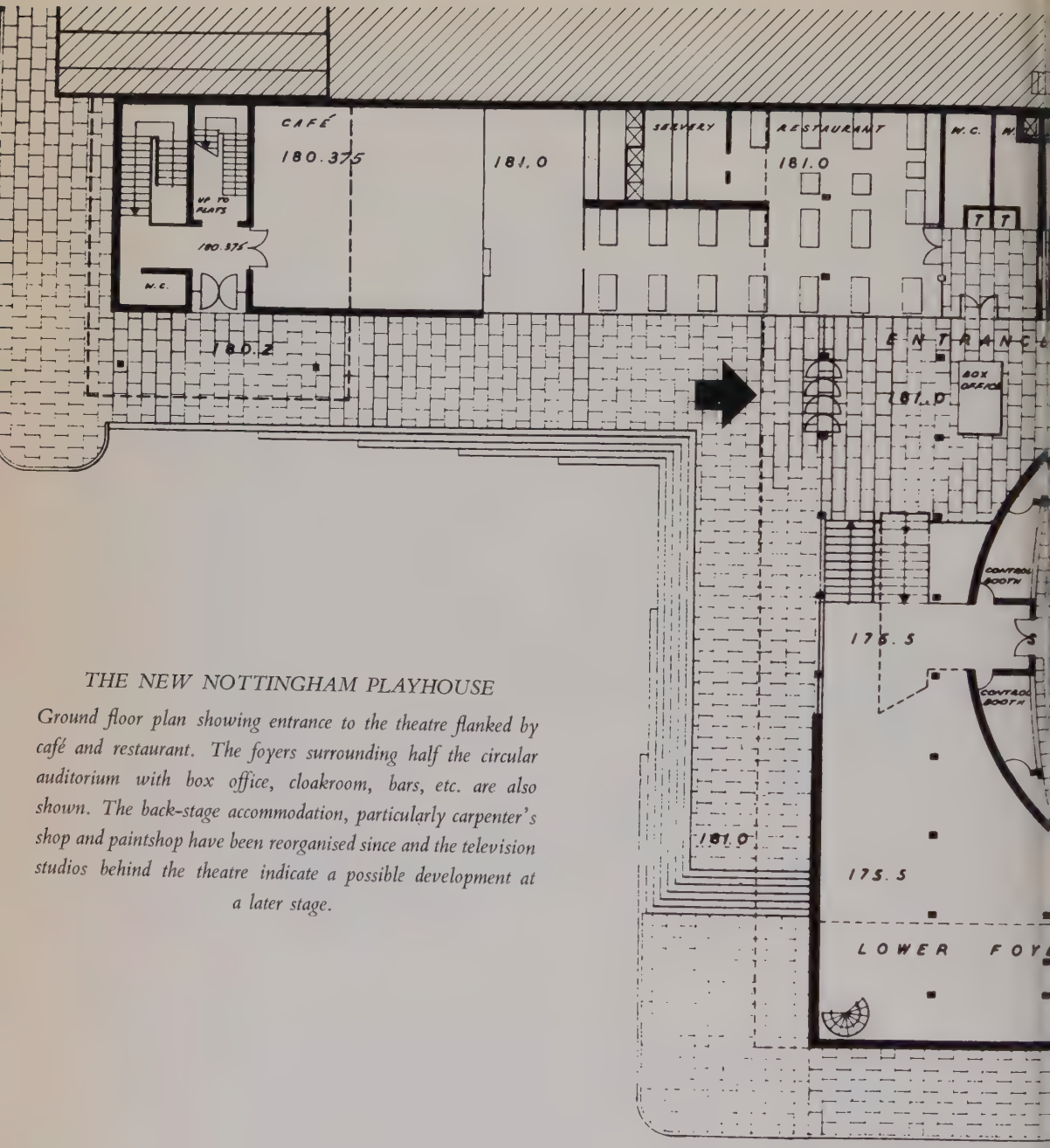


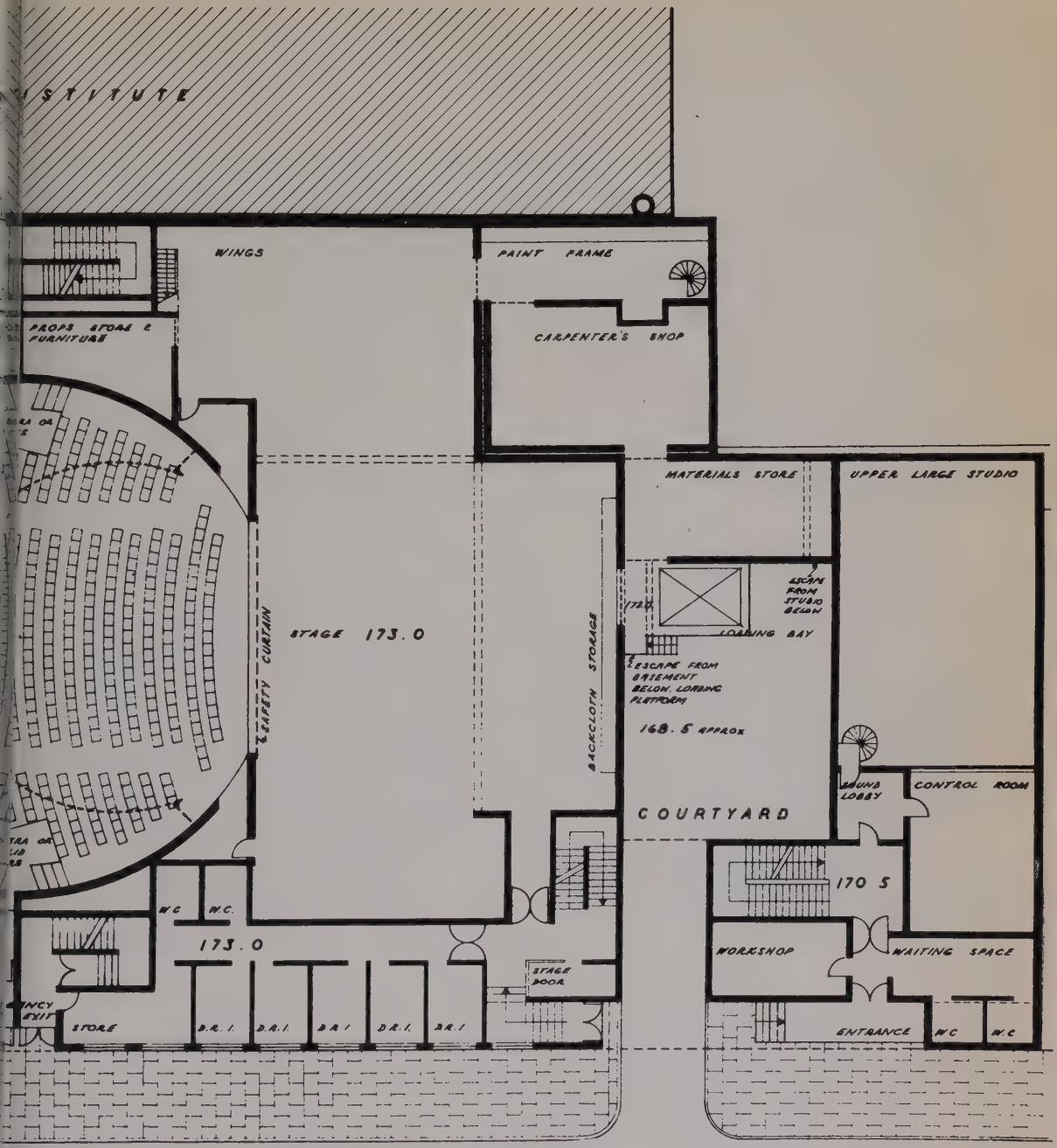
Photo : Mann Bros.

Photograph of the model. The view towards the entrance clearly shows the main element of the architectural conception: the cylindrical auditorium and stage tower surrounded by foyers, dressing rooms and other ancillary accommodation. The projecting wing contains Restaurant and Café with Art Gallery below and flats for actors above. The dark block in the background is an existing building.



THE NEW NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE

Ground floor plan showing entrance to the theatre flanked by café and restaurant. The foyers surrounding half the circular auditorium with box office, cloakroom, bars, etc. are also shown. The back-stage accommodation, particularly carpenter's shop and paintshop have been reorganised since and the television studios behind the theatre indicate a possible development at a later stage.


STITUTE
WINGS
PAINT FRAME
PROPS STORE & FURNITURE
CARPENTER'S SHOP
MATERIALS STORE
UPPER LARGE STUDIO
ESCAPE FROM STUDIO BELOW
LOADING BAY
SAFETY CURTAIN
STAGE 173.0
BACKCLOTH STORAGE
ESCAPE FROM BASEMENT BELOW LOADING PLATFORM
168.5 approx
COURTYARD
SOUND LOBBY
CONTROL ROOM
170 S
WORKSHOP
WAITING SPACE
ENTRANCE
W.C
W.C
W.C
W.C
173.0
STAGE DOOR
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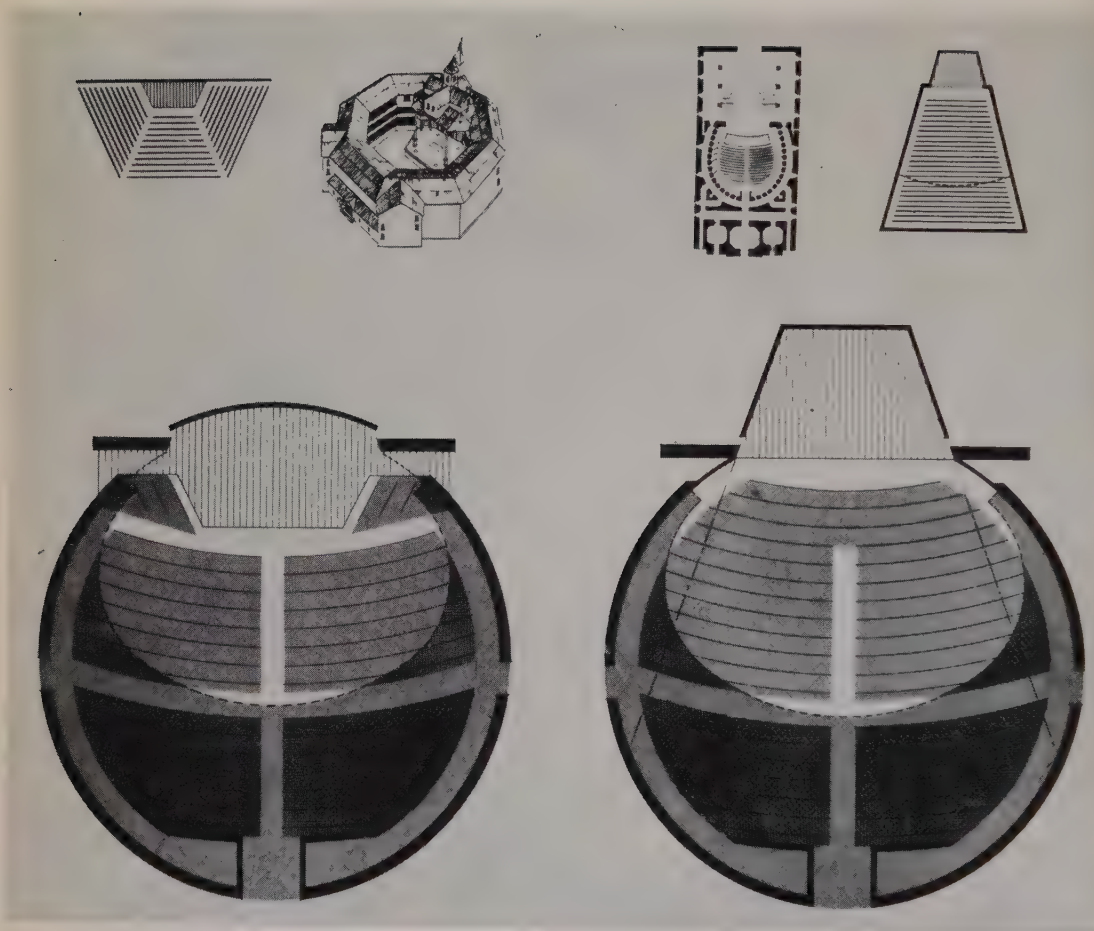

This shows how the Nottingham Playhouse can be used either as an open stage- or picture frame-theatre, comparing it with diagrammatic representation and actual historical examples of both these forms of theatre: Globe Theatre, London (1600), left*; Teatro San Carlo, Naples (1737),* right.

together the best of University drama at such a festival, for fun, comparison and criticism. The *Delphiade*, founded by the late Professor Leyhausen of Mainz, holds a biennial festival for the presentation of classical drama, Greek and Roman in particular, but not excluding the classical drama of later literatures. The European Student Theatre Union concerns itself in the main with modern drama—though at this festival the *Lysistrata* was an E.S.T.U. offering, and in return the *Delphiade* sponsored *The Revenger's Tragedy* as well as *M.N.D.*, which is as it should be. It is the practice of the E.S.T.U. to lay as much stress on criticism as on performance; every morning, at one of its festivals, the previous evening's play comes under discussion.

At one time or another several English University companies have been the guests of the E.S.T.U. or of the *Delphiade* in some European university city; there was therefore the feeling, on this side of the Channel, that it was time to return the compliment, and on the other side that it would be pleasant, for a change, to meet in England. The University of Bristol, through its Department of Drama, undertook the formidable task of acting as host to both organisations at once, assisted financially by the Gulbenkian Foundation, King's College, Cambridge, and the Sunday Times, and assisted in other ways, no less important, by the City of Bristol. Invitations were sent, in the name of either the *Delphiade* or the E.S.T.U., to foreign (and a few English) companies which from past experience were known to have a high standard of performance and a lively outlook. Naturally, there were disappointments: France was in the end not represented; Zagreb and Barcelona accepted invitations, only to find that they could not raise the money for the journey. However, the final tally was impressively international: Brussels, Coimbra, Frankfort, Genoa, Gothenburg, Istanbul, Mainz, Parma, Texas (Howard Payne College), and Zürich, with the Marlowe Society and the Dramatic Societies of Manchester and Bristol waving the Union Jack.

The major problem was to provide facilities for rehearsing and performing so many plays in so short a time, and that too in a country where the Sky-gods are so notoriously hostile to open-air drama. Naturally, the gods being what they are—nothing if not ironical—when this difficulty had been circumvented by the good fortune that the Theatre Royal was closed for the summer, and by the generosity of its Management, which opened it again for the festival, then the gods sent such a summer that one needn't have worried at all about open-air playing; and our guests departed thinking that England must be, after all, a land of eternal sunshine. The gods always win. However, the festival had three theatres at its disposal, including one of the most beautiful in England; the Theatre Royal, the Victoria Rooms, and—for foreigners willing to brave Beckett in English—the Drama Studio, where Manchester gave two performances of *End Game*, and Bristol two of *Waiting for Godot*. This side of the festival ran so smoothly, thanks largely to the Department's technical Director and to the willing and well trained help of many Bristol students, that sixteen times the curtain rose at, or within five minutes of, the advertised time—in spite of the notoriously dilatory habits of all foreigners.

Another question had been whether, apart from the participants in the festival, there would be any audience for the plays in the foreign languages, especially the remoter ones. The answer was Yes. For example, the Pocket Theatre of Istanbul not only attracted a reasonably large audience to the Theatre Royal, but also kept it in a constant ripple of amusement by the perfectly controlled verve of their performance of two short comedies. The programme of course provided a synopsis—and no doubt some of the general public arrived in time to read it before the curtain went up—but some of the most interesting

moments were those in which one had only the haziest idea of what was happening, not understanding a single word; but instead could see beautifully presented on the stage as if in an X-ray photograph, some of the eternal comic situations—the young lovers plotting against the tyrannical father, the charlatan taking in the "realist", the clever young heroine outwitting the charlatan.

The plays, no doubt, had been carefully chosen with the foreign audience in mind. If they were full-length plays, they were with one exception such that the audience might be presumed to have some knowledge of them already; that is, Greek or Roman classics, or Shakespeare; if they were such as would be unfamiliar, they were short. The one exception was *The Revenger's Tragedy*, in a beautiful and powerful production by the Marlowe Society, and that certainly seemed to hold its audience. With the Greek plays, one of the points of interest was to observe the differing lines of approach. Here, the English tradition on the whole tends towards the naturalistic; at this festival we saw Mainz doing *The Persians* in a markedly slow and stately fashion; Coimbra, with beautiful discipline, gave a tense, almost hieratic *Antigone*; the *Oedipus Rex* of Genoa was distinguished for its beauty, dignity and warmth —though perhaps its rather tentative use of masks was a distraction rather than a help. Zürich gave a most intelligent and sparkling performance of *Lysistrata*; it was pleasant to see a rendering of this play which took the sex-theme in its stride, quite naturally, instead of putting it in the shop-window. Parma made a most hilarious evening of the *Mostellaria*; enough to persuade the doubter that Plautus after all may have been really funny. The Texan *Dream* had been already on tour in this country. It had its critics, and its limitations, but it was a great success, deservedly so, with its two audiences; one has seen many elegant orthodox productions of the play that have done less justice to its poetry and humanity.

Apart from these classics, and the two Beckett plays which were not put forward as major contributions to the festival, double-bills were the rule—no doubt a wise concession to the language-difficulty. From this point of view an interesting experience was *Professor Taranne*, by Adamov, played by the Studentteater of Gothenburg. Here was a short play described as "avant-garde, inhabiting the twilight country of the absurd"; the gradual screwing-up of a kind of nightmare tension came through most impressively.

What general impressions were left? In fairness to our own student-drama we should remember that the guests at this festival were well-proven and carefully selected companies; a high standard of performance was to be expected. But that in itself is interesting; we are accustomed to University Dramatic Societies which will have a good and then a bad spell, according to what the cat has happened to bring in; standards can fluctuate wildly. But it was not only that the performances were good and assured; the discussions also—hard-hitting at times, but with no bones broken—reached a high level of critical maturity. There seem to be two points here, and in some sense the second may be thought to be the counterpart of the first. The first is that these companies are composed, mainly if not entirely, of students who are studying drama seriously, not for professional purposes—or not necessarily so—but as part of their academic course, and under the guidance, naturally, of the staff-members of the *Institut*, or whatever it is—with whom, incidentally, they seemed to be on very amiable terms. Hence the consistency in their work, and the impression they make that although they are not professionals they know what professional standards of work and discipline are like. The second point is that they include men of more mature age than our University societies normally do. The European Universities in any case do not hustle their students through with the celerity that is practised in

this country, under our very difficult system; but apart from that some of these actors were senior students working for doctorates or the like. An Oedipus of 28, other things being equal, will be a more impressive Oedipus than one of 22. But the reason—or one reason—why these older men remain with University groups, giving them more continuity and weight, is that whereas in England such men would move on from their University Society to a more grown-up amateur group, these men cannot, since on the Continent the amateur movement barely exists. Therefore they remain in their University company.

It may be thought that this measure of guidance, and of continuity, is not what we want; that it is every Englishman's birthright to play Hamlet if he wants to, and to produce *The Way of the World* if he can find a society which will let him do it. "Do it yourself" is an idea that is deeply ingrained in us, and on the whole it is not a bad idea; the festival did however prompt the question whether we do not allow our ideal of the amateur to breed in us more amateurishness than is good either for the art of drama or for ourselves individually. The analogy with University music may not be a close one, but for all that may be worth bearing in mind. It is obviously easier for a young amateur of talent to give a tolerable performance on the stage than on the violin or French horn; for that reason one accepts without question that a University orchestra must be rehearsed and conducted by one who is virtually a professional, and that if it appears in public it will be stiffened by professional leaders of sections. In University drama the need is not so obvious; does that mean that it is not there at all?

Ruminations on the festival should not entirely neglect its social aspect. It is not an event of enormous importance that some three hundred young foreigners should spend a week in an English City; still, it has some significance. Certainly "Foreign Students Fight on Bristol Bridge" would have made an unpleasant headline. There was never any danger of its appearing.

It is an odd fact, until you come to think of it, that these visiting companies were not only foreigners to the English; they were also foreigners to each other. Therefore a few unobtrusive things were done at the start to mix up the groups. Everything went as pleasantly as could be. The language difficulty turned out to be surprisingly unimportant; some common language was usually found, and some Bristol students had nobly come back in mid-vacation to act as interpreters in case of need. But what "made" the festival, from this point of view, was the co-operation of the City. The Lord Mayor himself took the keenest and friendliest interest in it, and each foreign company was "adopted" by some business house or public body in the city, which entertained it to a supper-party or a lunch, and, on another occasion, showed it something of its own operations. By all accounts this hospitality was equally delightful to guests and hosts.

Concurrently with the festival an exhibition of University Drama, here and abroad, was shown in the City Art Gallery; and it was a graceful compliment from the professional to the amateur theatre that Mr. Paul Robeson came down to speak at the official opening of the festival, and Dame Peggy Ashcroft to open the exhibition.

It was quite clear that both the *Delphiade* and the E.S.T.U. would be very happy to hold its festival in this country again. When a decent interval has passed, will some other University and City give an invitation?

Building the Young Audience

BRYAN BAILEY

[Mr. Bailey is Director of the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry's civic theatre, which has this year been awarded £1,300 by the Gulbenkian Foundation for special study of the questions posed in this article.]

THE professional theatre in this conntry has never made any real attempt to win young people. Within this simple statement lies the heart of the most urgent problem facing all those who are in any way concerned with the future of the living theatre in Great Britain.

Theatre audiences throughout the country are middle-aged to elderly; it is only occasionally in specialist theatres that one finds the younger generation represented to any appreciable extent. That older people have retained a loyalty to the living theatre proves the power of an allegiance won in youth. Despite the increasing emphasis on drama in education, despite the growth of school and university dramatics and the development of a nation-wide amateur theatre movement, there has been no corresponding linking of young people with the professional theatre.

Where lies the fault? Theatre Managements are in large measure to blame, though in so many cases the blame is hidden beneath the constant stresses and strains that bedevil the thinking and planning of professional theatre companies.

It was against this background that the Belgrade Theatre Trust, with its unique opportunity to experiment with fresh ideas, decided to make an attack on this vast problem of winning for the living theatre a new and largely young audience. The first approach to this problem must obviously come through schools.

This is not the place to discuss the complicated questions involved in drama in education, especially the conviction, held by some, that young children should be encouraged only to act and improvise plays themselves. No one surely questions the value of this aspect of school drama; but at the same time the impression created by those few professional children's theatres that exist in this country makes it certain that much greater use should be made of their work. Many more companies are needed to bring plays of simplicity, of action and of imagination into the lives of young children.

This must be for so many a first introduction to the all-important principle that an audience in a living theatre is as much part of the success of a play as are the actors. An audience by its response and its own contribution is a real and active protagonist in the event.

It is the hope of the Theatre Trust here in Coventry that at some point it may be possible to mount specially chosen productions which it can take round to schools within the area in order to introduce the idea of watching plays to younger children. At the same time the Theatre is available to a limited extent for the presentation of suitable plays for a very young audience. In recent years it is only at the short-lived New Shakespeare Theatre, in Liverpool, that a sustained effort was made to present children's plays on a regular weekly basis.

In this country, however, with inadequate theatre buildings and limited resources, it is unlikely that this particular basic approach to the question of building up young audiences can make much headway. If the standards of material, acting and presentation of professional Children's Theatre companies can be established and enhanced and if those few theatres that could present them can win the support of Directors of Education, then gradual progress can be made as the values of the experiments are proven.

What is already achieved in this country in a number of places is a real co-operation between theatre managements and the local education authority, by the provision of certain school

matinees of selected plays. The Belgrade Theatre, with its close link with the authority, found that the Education Committee in Coventry was keen and anxious to establish a close liaison from the beginning. The Education Committee sets aside a sum of money each year for the purchase of tickets for distribution to the schools of the city for certain productions thought to be of particular value. To this end, an informal committee of Head Teachers meets the Director of the Theatre in order to discuss possible plays and the timing of these. The actual distrubution of tickets is undertaken by the Education Authority; the theatre by this scheme knows that it can depend upon certain attendances and financial returns for certain productions. What is immensely encouraging is the fact that the teachers themselves recognize that a too narrow approach in this introduction of theatre to young people will defeat its own object. Whilst, therefore, Shakespeare and the occasional classic will naturally be amongst those plays selected, it is the teachers' view that the Theatre should be known for its entertainment value as well.

The example of the Nottingham Authority in this direction should be emulated by other Education Authorities which have theatres within their area. In Nottingham the number of school matinees has grown to 36 in each year and the plays to which school parties come are remarkable for their range. It is of course easy to dismiss this "crocodile" approach as something of little value. "It's just an excuse to escape school," such is the obvious criticism. Nevertheless, if plays, classics or modern, are presented well, and if they are introduced to young people through school in an intelligent and lively fashion, such visits are of real value. For so many young people it is their first visit to a straight play; the paramount importance of this first impression is frequently forgotten.

It is the policy of the Belgrade Theatre for the Director and his colleagues to link themselves with the schools in many ways. The Head Teachers, and members of school staffs who are particularly concerned with English and Dramatic activities in the schools, know that the theatre may be approached for help and advice on any occasion. Opportunities have frequently been taken of visiting the schools, talking to classes, groups and specialist clubs in schools about the theatre and about their own particular approach to dramatic activities. Wherever possible the theatre staff visit school productions and encourage teachers to bring classes of their own pupils to visit the theatre, to see round it and to take "Theatre" as a project for discussion and study.

School-time visits, however, should be secondary to the encouragement of young people to attend the theatre regularly and in the ordinary way of leisure-time activity. The theatre must always be an "evening out" but more than merely a Christmas or holiday "treat". To help towards this an Under-20 Club was created. This is available to all young people, at school or at work, between the ages of 13 and 20. No subscription is called for; merely the filling in of a form which is countersigned by a parent, teacher, or employer. This is exchanged for a membership card which on presentation at the box office at most performances each week entitles the bearer to a seat at half-price, provided seats are available. Through the co-operation of teachers, employers and others, the membership of the Under-20 Club has risen to over three-and-a-half thousand and the number of young people attending the theatre on a regular basis is growing from production to production.

They come to the theatre as a natural part of living, they come in their twos and threes and find themselves accepted by the theatre and its staff and by the adult audience in a friendly and easy way. There has not been one complaint or adverse comment by an adult about the behaviour of young people in the theatre. There can be no better evidence of the influence, not only of this exciting building, but also of

the natural mixing of age groups in communal activity. It is this fact, most of all, that encourages the Belgrade Theatre to feel that it has begun to grasp the real problem of building an audience for the future.

In a repertory theatre it is essential that the management should establish a personal contact with as many of its audience as it can. To develop this aspect with young people, it was decided to embark upon a series of talks and demonstrations for them on theatre matters. The work of the British Drama League in London during Christmas holidays suggested the value of this approach. The Belgrade Theatre first introduced a series of "Theatre Holiday" sessions during Christmas, 1958, to which members of the resident company, staff and some visitors contributed. These proved so successful that a further series was arranged in all succeeding holidays. So great has been the demand and so immediate and encouraging the response that each term three or more Saturday morning sessions are arranged. At all of these the maximum number to be admitted was fixed at 200 and a charge of 1/6d. is made. The range of subjects covered is extensive, they attract a wide age-range and are continually bringing more young people into close touch with the theatre.

The aim of the "Theatre Holiday" sessions is not to encourage young people to embark upon a theatrical career nor to destroy magic and the illusion of the living theatre. They are designed to bridge the gap between school drama and the living professional theatre within the community. By increasing knowledge about the theatre they encourage a more selective and critical approach to theatre-going. Above all, they present also opportunities for conveying to young people an understanding of the part that an audience has to play in the success of the theatre. Those brought up in an era of radio, cinema, television, lack the essential knowledge of the part played by the discipline and behaviour of an audience in the living theatre. In the mechanized entertainment media there is no need for an audience to respond, to contribute, and these "Theatre Holiday" sessions can help to remedy that deficiency, to demonstrate and prove conclusively the part that an audience must play if the living theatre is truly to be a place of creative art.

The Belgrade Theatre, covering an area in which there are a considerable number of technical colleges, teachers' training colleges, and, in Birmingham, a University, realized that the approach to young people must take into consideration the importance of the undergraduate and the student. It is at this particular level that repertory theatres have most evidently failed to keep abreast with new dramatic thought and theatrical needs. It is in the impatience of young people with much old fashioned theatre, with the tired and cosy comedy, that we find the biggest gap between theatre provision and theatre demand. There will be no easy answer to this particular problem until young people are numerous enough amongst audiences to support with loyalty the more adventurous programme we all wish to provide.

There is another section of the community that is so often missing in our theatres: young people of twenty to thirty—young married couples and those who seek "an evening out" and not solely entertainment or, for that matter, culture. The building itself of the Belgrade Theatre is of real value here. The additional amenities and facilities it provides make it possible for the young couple to enjoy a full evening without the constant search for cafés, restaurants and pubs away from the theatre—a fact which has built up this particular section of our audience to such a large degree. The quality and range of the plays chosen are obviously of vital importance, but so too is the provision of comfortable accommodation where refreshments are available in an atmosphere free from rush and hurry, where talk, discussion and argument may flourish, where leisure and relaxation go hand in hand with the

theatre. In this respect, too, the theatre's opportunity of providing ancillary activities has come into its own. The co-operation with the extra-mural department of Birmingham University, the provision of lunch-time poetry readings, lectures on dramatists, on theatre, art and allied subjects, the development of training courses in drama and similar subjects, all these have provided occasions for young people to come to the theatre and find, in the building, activities connected with the arts in general. Sunday concerts and Theatre Club evenings are other activities which can make a theatre contribute to life as a whole rather than remain in a narrow backwater.

The Trust and all those who work within the Belgrade Theatre have seen the impact of this new venture upon young Coventry. There is real determination to underline this policy and to show how the professional living theatre can still win young people's allegiance and by so doing enrich the lives of individuals and of the community alike. There is no greater problem to be tackled and no greater battle to be won.

It was, therefore, a matter of pride and immense satisfaction when it was learnt that the Gulbenkian Foundation was prepared to assist in this aspect of our work. A grant is to be made available to enable the theatre to have a member of its staff working solely on the problem of bringing the theatre closer to young people and making its impact even more vivid and stimulating. This new scheme, which will run throughout 1960, will be the occasion not merely for further development on the lines that have already been indicated, but will provide an opportunity to investigate new methods of winning a young audience.

There is urgent need for a much fuller investigation of what young people think about theatre and drama, of their views about acting and their understanding of the part played by an audience; there is urgent need to know more about young people's choice of plays and to know, too, something more of the effects of an over-insistence on the classics in early school-time theatre-going. At the end of the year a report will be issued examining in very great detail the various methods adopted here and in other theatres in work with young people. This report will seek to assess future developments and problems, and to suggest the allocation of responsibility in the task that will lie ahead. It is hoped that ideas will be stimulated and fresh encouragement given to living professional theatres throughout the country to tackle this problem with determination and in the spirit of victory.

Question and Answer

DAME PEGGY ASHCROFT

(DAME PEGGY ASHCROFT was interviewed by Jill Pomerance at The Royal Court Theatre early in the successful run of George Devine's production of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, in which Dame Peggy appeared as Rebecca West. The play was newly translated for this production by Anne Jellicoe.)

How do you see the position of provincial repertory in England today, Dame Peggy—and what of its future?

There is no doubt that television has made great inroads upon the potential audience of the average repertory theatre. We must face the fact that weekly or fortnightly repertory

productions simply cannot offer the same quality of presentation as television. Financial support for repertory should come from the towns, since these alone possess the resources to provide subsidies large enough for rehearsal time to be extended and high-quality work produced. In my opinion it is useless to prolong the life of repertory as a sort of poor relation of television. No, other towns must follow the example set by Nottingham and Coventry and now, I am happy to hear, by Leicester.

You feel, then, that new buildings are of prime importance in the provinces?

In the provinces and elsewhere. I recently visited Holland, a country whose population is scarcely comparable in size with that of our own, yet which boasts several new civic theatres. These theatres are spacious and contain restaurants, ample space for the audience to stroll and talk during the intervals, and are often surrounded by gardens. They are a pleasure to visit and a pleasure to act in.

Do you think that leading actors might be induced to appear at the more important provincial repertory theatres?

In my opinion it is mainly the shortage of rehearsal time that is the bugbear here. I, for instance, consider that at least one month's intensive rehearsal is necessary for any play. I certainly feel that leading actors would much more readily consent to appear in plays that they had already done successfully in London. Such an arrangement would also be helpful to repertory companies, since the actor would bring with him an intimate knowledge of the play, and so would provide a central figure around which to build the production.

A great deal is made of the fact that actors are bohemians at heart, and that to featherbed them in community theatres might spoil them as artists. Do you agree?

Of course I don't. This idea is completely outmoded. It is essential that besides having good dressing rooms and rehearsal rooms, theatres should possess a Green Room with a canteen. The provision of a canteen is extremely necessary, since actors normally eat at what are—for the general public—unusual hours. I like the idea of providing self-contained flats or flatlets in connection with community theatres—but not hostels. Hostels for actors simply do not work.

About this often-quoted difference between London and provincial audiences: do you agree that such a difference exists, and if so would you care to define it?

Differences certainly do exist, but they defy analysis. The reactions of audiences vary with plays, and you must remember that the London public is big enough to provide an audience of sorts for almost any type of play. Of course, you find marked differences between provincial cities, too. I do feel that audiences can be educated in their appreciation of the drama until they really enjoy a serious play. In Newcastle, for example, you have a really wonderful public for the serious play, because Newcastle's public is theatrically educated. Paradoxically enough, television may here have helped towards the creation of such an audience.

What contribution can Universities make to the professional theatre?

Well, they can create Departments of Drama! And Oxford and Cambridge have contributed much talent to the theatre, chiefly—I suppose—because of the individual efforts of men such as George Rylands and Neville Coghill. Of course student drama, generally speaking, has helped to foster interest in the theatre.

Would you agree that the very successful productions of Brand *at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and now of* Rosmersholm *here at the Royal Court, indicate a revival of interest in Ibsen, and perhaps a re-evaluation of his status as a dramatist?*

It is difficult to compare *Brand* with *Rosmersholm*. They are two very dissimilar plays, one written early, one late in Ibsen's career. I think they should be considered together, in the context of a general revival of interest in Ibsen on the part of the commercial theatre. In recent years there have been successful London presen-

tations of *Hedda Gabler, Ghosts* and *The Wild Duck*. Again, television has perhaps helped the theatre in popularising the work of Ibsen, who certainly ranks among the world's twelve greatest dramatists. Ibsen, of course, is popular in repertory, and many repertory theatres put on one of his plays each season.

One final question, Dame Peggy: do the public really follow actors? Are the public chiefly drawn by 'names'?

Undoubtedly, yes. I do not want you to think, however, that I subscribe to the idea that the public should follow 'names'. The ideal state of affairs is found when an audience attaches itself to a particular acting company and to a particular theatre. This is what makes for real stability, since it ensures continuity of interest. Stratford and the Old Vic draw the public undoubtedly, but these are very special cases and the "draw" is Shakespeare. I should like to see a National Theatre Company with a repertoire of classics and modern plays. Such a company would, of course, include well-known actors, but finally it would be the high standard it could achieve that would be its greatest attraction.

The Reps and New Plays— A Writer's Viewpoint

JOHN ARDEN

[John Arden, author of *Live Like Pigs* and *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, is this year's holder of the Fellowship in Playwriting awarded by the Drama Department of the University of Bristol]

I AM A dramatist: but at the time of writing I have had no play produced in a provincial theatre. Therefore this article is likely to prove a little fraudulent—I am writing not out of my experience of the Reps but out of wishful thinking about their potential value to the new playright—and like all wishful thinking its value is bound be qualified by an indeterminate margin of error. However, there are certain questions which I can easily pose: and if the answers I suggest do not in fact turn out to be the ones which experience has taught other writers and managements, then I can only say that times are changing, that what is true for today may not be true tomorrow, and that wishful thinking is not always too far removed from the formulation of valid projects.

First then: is there any reason to suppose that the provincial Reps are any more able to make a success of the production of a new play than any of the London theatres? That if a play is rejected, or is accepted and then fails, at the Royal Court or Theatre Workshop—or at a West End playhouse (where new plays of quality are not unknown, despite fashionable opinion)—may it still hope for acceptance and a production of reasonable standard in some other city? The answer to this question depends to some extent upon what writers think of as "acceptance". A production of a new play in Bristol or Birmingham may very likely receive some notice in some newspapers of the national press: and what is more, in newspapers of responsibility. But it will not receive *headlines* in any paper,

nor will the dramatist be accorded the ultimate accolade of mention in the gossip-writers' spiteful-sycophantic pages. It is highly probable that until he finally achieves a London production his name will remain quite unfamiliar everywhere, except among a few people in the place where his play has been shewn. Does this matter to him? How important is fame to the dramatist? Naturally it is very pleasant: but far more important, it may be thought, is the knowledge that at least his play had an audience.

Now in a provincial town with a Repertory Theatre, there is usually some sort of regular audience. (If there is not, there is not going to be a theatre there for very long, and the sooner that Theatre goes, the better. If people do not go to the Theatre, it usually means today that they are receiving better entertainment on the TV; and if they are, then the Rep Company in question is wasting its time trying to sell second-rate goods. This is cruel, perhaps: but unless the theatre can offer something not only different from but also more stimulating than the TV, there is no use at all trying to defend it or revive it.) The regular audience of a Rep Theatre is often said not to like new plays as well as it does the classics, or even plays that were new in London a year or so ago. This is not surprising, because people are generally conservative, and prefer to enjoy something that they have already been warned is enjoyable, rather than be compelled to form their own opinions about a work from scratch. Nevertheless, if a Rep management has achieved a reputation for artistic quality and if its productions of classics and not-so-new new plays are well supported, it should find that an occasional production of a really new play will pay sufficiently well to justify itself.

And those members of the regular audience who do brace themselves to go and see that play will in all probability be a far better audience for the dramatist than any of the heterogeneous gatherings that patronise the London shows. I write this from experience. The same month that my own *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* was on at the Royal Court, I attended a (matinée, be it noted) performance of another new play, Anne Piper's *The Maneaters* in Bristol. The difference in audience-reactions was remarkable. I do not merely mean that Mrs. Piper's play was liked, whereas (at least by a fair section of the house) mine was not. *That*, after all, is all in the drop of the dice. But the Bristol audience, I could immediately feel, had come to the Theatre determined to make a good evening for themselves, in a playhouse where they were in the habit of being entertained solidly and regularly. In Sloane Square, on the other hand, there was an atmosphere of casual boredom even before the curtain rose, derived from almost a minority of the audience, but horribly communicated to the others with the inevitable telepathy of the theatre. This was not only because I had written the play. I have always found the same thing in London—except when the press, for its own fairly suspect reasons, has been bludgeoning the people to attend—or else when the play has been given a lukewarm set of notices, but the word has got round that it is a good show for the *provincial* coach-parties to book for. It is significant that both *The Maneaters* and *Serjeant Musgrave* had received some ferocious and apparently damaging criticisms in the newspapers. My play *was* damaged: Anne Piper's was not. And if the provincial Reps can help dramatists to disregard the inconsistencies and irresponsibilities of the critics, they are already performing one enormous service to art, almost without intending it.

The next question to be considered is: what sort of drama is most likely to receive support from the provincial audiences? Or to put it another way: if the theatre is to survive outside London and provide a satisfactory alternative to the T.V., and the cinema, how far removed from those two derivative arts is it going to have to be? My answer to this is bound to be a subjective one. Arnold Wesker and Anne

Piper are probably going to differ considerably from me here. They would no doubt say—and on the basis of their own experience, with justification—that the new plays should be naturalistic reflections of life familiar to their audiences, and that the important contemporary issues that they wish to handle are best presented against such a background. I feel, however, that this in the long run will prove a mistaken notion. The best of T.V., and the best of modern cinema, is following precisely this recipe—and I think is likely to continue to do so. Eventually the same old trouble will begin again. The people who enjoyed *Roots* at Coventry or *The Maneaters* at Bristol will find that they will soon be enjoying similar works from the rapidly-maturing writers of the rival mediums, and once more the theatres will begin to notice the empty seats. Naturalism and everyday conversation is most suited to the drawing-room fireside auditorium where the voices of the actors need to be raised no more than in real life. The essential artificiality of the public stage will become apparent again, and the plays upon its boards will in the end only irritate as they did in the early days of the Talkies.

But the artificiality of the stage is one of its most important qualities. To say that it irritates is like saying that fine clothes annoy us by keeping us warm, or that a handsome house is a nuisance because its roof prevents the rain from coming in. People must want to come to the Theatre *because* of the artificiality, not despite it: and if enough plays are presented that make a point of this quality, the harm done by too long an acceptance of the similarity between T.V. and Theatre will in time be mended. The trend of my argument will now be becoming clear: I am pleading for the revival of the Poetic Drama, no less. A pathetic cause, continually canvassed, and as continually disappointed. There was such a revival hailed a few years ago, when Eliot, Duncan, Fry and others were thought to be the spearhead of the great movement. But the vanguard of the army proved to be the rearguard as well, and if there ever was a main body it had fallen aside somewhere along the line of march and thrown away its uniforms—in some cases even exchanging them for those of the enemy. I think the real reason for this collapse was a basic misconception as to the true use of poetry in the theatre. Far too much effort was expended in trying to prove that it is possible to adapt the common conversational speech of today into a workable blank-verse line. Well, it *is* possible: we known that now. But somewhere in the process the essential blood and guts of dramatic poetry was forgotten, and the new plays—although they certainly held the attention, pleased the ear, and engaged the mind—never succeeded in stirring our hearts, our stomachs, our . . . well, Apollo was invoked all right, but the true terrible muse was left to howl unheard in the hills—or between the lines of the *News of the World*. When she *was* eventually fetched upon a public stage by John Osborne, she came dressed in the sensible shoes and tweed skirt of naturalistic convention and she has, I believe, made it tolerably clear that she does not care to repeat that sort of pre-extinguished entrance very often.

There are today certain trends in favour of a genuine theatrical poetry. Brendan Behan knows what is wanted, so does Anne Jellicoe. *A Taste of Honey* was also a happy omen—though I suspect the production rather than the script had most to do with it here. Miss Delany's play *could* have been presented just as any old straight slice of life: and had it been, three quarters of the freshness and vigour would have been lost. It is not necessary for dramatists to write in verse—and if they do, there is no reason for them to involve themselves in Eliot's laborious theories of sprung rhythm and so forth—ordinary verse that rhymes and uses an iambic beat or a ballad stanza will do just as well. The vital point is that they must bring to their writing a sense of the Theatre as a place where plays are made out of the details of ordinary life indeed: but where those details are

treated as the stone in a quarry or the clay in a brickfield is treated by the builder of a tower. If they are handled like prefabricated parts to be used without modification and with slavish adherence to their given dimensions, then the plays will be on the whole no more interesting than a row of Nissen huts, and people will be as glad to abandon them as they are to abandon a 1945 prefab in favour of a new purpose-made architect-designed house.

There is of course bound to be an awkward period ahead of any Repertory management that tries to build up an audience for new plays of the sort I have suggested. Audiences unfamiliar with this aim of theatre will have to be weaned: and in the process of weaning some playhouses may lose heart and be compelled to revert to administering the more accustomed diet. But you can't feed a child on mother's milk all its life. Either it does become weaned or else it dies. I feel like the Spartans—put the baby on the mountainside if it really is not going to thrive. Losses must be cut. Compromise will defeat itself. The camera will win in a fight where it chooses its own weapons. And if it wins, it will also lose, because there will be no actors, writers or directors to bring in new blood from the public stages to the T.V. studio: and all that will be left is the panel-game, the news-broadcast, the sportsview, and the serialized Western. All our films will be foreign: and all our plays will be read in books.

Book Reviews

Modern German Drama: by H. F. Garten, Methuen & Co. London, 1959, 272 pp. 21s.

Modern German drama, that is drama since Gerhart Hauptmann, has been much neglected in this country, both in books and on the boards. We are now doing a good deal to put this right. Hauptmann's *Einsame Menschen* (*Lonely Lives*) and the Lunts' production of Dürrenmatt's *Besuch der alten Dame* (*Time and Again*) have recently been given, and the B.B.C. has produced several of Brecht's plays. Earlier this year, Methuen's published an excellent book on *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* by John Willett, which was reviewed in the last number of this magazine. They now give us *Modern German Drama* by H. F. Garten, which will be warmly welcomed, especially by students of German literature, as giving a very competent survey of the subject.

Mr. Garten first deals with the development of Naturalism in Germany and analyses Hauptmann's main plays. He was a friend of Hauptmann's and has already published a short monograph on him in the Bowes and Bowes series *Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought*, Cambridge, 1954. This perhaps leads him to exaggerate the merits of *Florian Geyer*, which, though good theatre, is surely miles inferior to *Die Weber*. The Agamemnon cycle, a striking product of his last years, on the other hand, he hardly does justice to, dismissing it in one short paragraph.

He has a good section on Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose dramas, apart from the libretti, are not nearly as well-known here as they might be: *Der Tor und der Tod* (*Death and the Fool*) is a fine enough work to demand reading in the original; and *Der Schwierige* (*The Difficult One*), successfully performed by the Oxford University German Society a few years back, is one of the few really good modern comedies in German.

There is a very useful chapter on Expressionism, which describes its evolution and the works

of its main exponents, Fritz von Unruh, Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser. Mr. Garten brings out well the tremendous impact these plays had on the German theatre and how much greater was their value as literary stimuli than as works of art in themselves.

The latter part of the book shows clearly how strongly German drama of the last forty years has been influenced by the political situation, the rise and fall of the Weimar Republic and of National Socialism and the complete collapse of Germany in 1945. In this period two names stand out above all others and they are both well-known in the English-speaking world: Bert Brecht and Carl Zuckmayer, who owes his fame mainly to the phenomenal success of *Des Teufels General* (*The Devil's General*), 1946. Apart from these two figures in the foreground, the final chapters cover ground largely unknown over here and Mr. Garten has introduced a large caste of modern German playwrights (many of them admittedly second-rate) to his English readers.

The English translations of German quotations, some of which are rather flat, have been poorly served in that passages which seem to be prose have been printed as though they were verse (e.g. pp. 90 and 204).

There are some very interesting illustrations, mostly photographs of German stage productions.

ESTELLE MORGAN

The World of Paul Slickey; by John Osborne, Faber & Faber, 10s. 6d.

It is salutory to have the published text of Mr. Osborne's "comedy of manners with music", since the hostile reception it received in performance was widely attributed to an organized clique, and the play can now be judged dispassionately on the page.

It is dedicated to:

> the liars and self-deceivers; to those who daily deal out treachery; to those who handle their professions as instruments of debasement; to those who, for a salary cheque or less, successfully betray my country; and those who will do it for no inducement at all.

As the lightly concealed name of the principal character indicates, the play purports to be an exposé of the "gossip columnists", but in fact this exposé is limited to the use of the offices of the *Daily Racket* as one of the two scenes and to several of the songs. Beyond this the author appears to have nothing to say on the subject and is reduced to squeezing laughter from such exhausted sources as country-householders, the gentlewoman's delight in capital punishment and a dismally unfunny episode about change of sex. This introduces a quartet who are called on to sing:

> We could start the most exciting and
> exclusive clique.
> If we're too tired when to go to bed
> We could change our trews instead
> And be a woman at the weekend and a man
> all the week.

which is an offence to grammar as well as taste. There is also the mock-requiem, "You can't get away with it", which gave considerable offence in performance but which seems merely meaningless in print.

The banality of the material is matched by the feebleness of the treatment. Nowhere does Mr. Osborne display his bleak but proven gift of invective. This is especially lacking in the lyrics which are defective in rhythm and point. While it is not possible to judge their effectiveness out of their musical context, they must have presented a daunting task to the composer, Christopher Whelen. For example, the journalists' chorus, "Put it on ice", includes the following exchanges.

LADIES: Please do not sneeze
We're in a deep freeze
Just take our tips
Those burning lips
Give us the pips.

MEN: Get in those bunks
You icy chunks.

LADIES: Stand back you punks!

which no music could hope to redeem.

The publication of *The World of Paul Slickey* was necessary, but its effect is to confirm the view that Mr. Osborne has no gift for the musical play.

GEORGE ROWELL

The Birthday Party, a play in three acts by Harold Pinter. Encore Publishing Co. Ltd. 57 pages. 5/-

HAROLD PINTER'S play, *The Birthday Party*, ran for eight performances at the Lyric, Hammersmith, in the spring of last year. The critics of the daily press clawed it; the Sunday newspapers, and the weeklies, extended a puzzled but on the whole generous welcome. The publishers of *Encore* have now sponsored a first edition of *The Birthday Party*, the appearance of which coincides with a timely revival of the play by the Questors' company at Ealing.

Mr. Pinter is an expert in the mechanics of boredom. He has an intimate knowledge of the wasteland into which social necessity so often turns the imaginative impulses of men. He is, moreover, keenly aware of the odd creatures that haunt this ambiguous region: it might be said of him that—like the off-stage character of *The Cocktail Party*—he can hear the cry of bats. For it is just such a sinister note the Mr. Pinter catches, with chilling effectiveness, in dialogue that has a bizarre, internal logic of its own, rather like certain B.B.C. news headlines, or lists of items in auction catalogues. The dialogue of *The Birthday Party* is wholly contemporary, and at times it is hilariously funny. But this is not to say that the author's view of life is a comic one. *The Birthday Party* is, indeed, a bitter play, but its bitterness is astringent, not self-pitying. Stan Webber can never translate himself out of the dingy present back into the realm of delight he once glimpsed before "they" slammed the doors shut on his bright vision for ever. And Stan knows it. It is this realization that makes the anonymous seaside town and the soiled lodgings just bearable to him: here, at least, is the domain of the uncommitted, a half-way house that still abuts upon the frontiers of imaginative reality. It is left to a solid citizen and his strong-arm man finally to shatter Stan's vision and to drag him gibbering off into the conformist's dreary paradise "dressed in striped trousers, black jacket, and white collar. . . ."

This is a remarkable work, assured of its place in the body of new drama that is reaching out beyond the old perimeter wall of the well-made play. If you doubt this, get a copy of *The Birthday Party* and read with your ear delicately upon the stretch. Or, better, go and see the play when other companies have at last the good sense to follow the lead given by the Lyric and the Questors.

HARRY THOMPSON

Traveller Without Luggage, by Jean Anouih, translated by John Whiting, Methuen and Co., 10/6, has also been received and will be reviewed in our next issue.

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